

Cruising turns mainstream in Africa

By [Nick Wilkinson](#)

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African travellers are joining the millions of cruise-goers who holiday at sea each year, booking seven-night packages in far-flung, exotic locations. And, when they return, which they do at an exceptionally high rate, they combine new land packages to maximise their time and experiences abroad.



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The Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) predicts 30-million travellers will cruise in 2019, with Instagrammable cruise travel one of 11 'rising trends' identified in the 2019 Cruise Travel Trends and State of the Cruise Industry Outlook Report.

According to the study, Instagram posts are driving interest in travel from around the world. So much so, the CLIA says, that on an average day, there can be close to 351-million posts with the #travel hashtag. "With onboard connectivity, cruise passengers' Instagram feeds with diverse travel experiences both onboard and on land from several cruise destinations," the CLIA says.

Travellers are also seeking restorative and conscious, mindful travel experiences, the report shows, while off-peak bookings and solo travel are growing in numbers.

In Africa, Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) has identified central Africa, Botswana and Namibia as growth markets.

South Africa, NCL's largest producer of passengers on the continent, is already its second largest producer of Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Events (MICE) business internationally, and third for multi-generational family bookings.

With so many elements included in the cruise fare, which would add up at any land-based resort, most passengers return to us within two years. That represents significant potential for our retail partners, and incentive travel and events planners on the continent.



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Africa's 'new money' markets, a middle-class that is only just starting to explore the world and consider a cruise for their next holiday, is another growth segment, blossoming in countries where there is economic growth.

Based on NCL bookings, first-time passengers generally test the waters with a seven-night sailing. Venice, Barcelona, Copenhagen - to the Baltic Sea - and the Greek Islands are the top-selling itineraries in Africa and, for experienced cruisers, new ships and exciting onboard product developments are a huge drawcard.

Our customers are also travelling further to embark on their dream cruise, with demand for bucket-list destinations such as Alaska, US itineraries and departures out of Singapore and Hong Kong, more attractive because of their affordability factor.

Travellers and the destination experience

The CLIA's 2019 Cruise Outlook report also describes access as "the new luxury", and travellers are seeking out destinations that were previously out of reach, some only accessible now by cruise ship. "They want to be among the first of their peers to experience destinations such as the Galapagos Islands and Antarctica," the report reveals.

In the travel industry, there is the belief that every person has a bucket list, whether consciously or not, and with product development in the cruise industry that is unparalleled, there is a ship, port of call and itinerary to suit every type of traveller.

The CLIA 2019 Cruise Outlook has also identified 'working nomads', who combine work with leisure time and female communities as other "rising opportunities", while Generation Z will eclipse Millennials as the largest consumer generation by 2020. Both Millennials and Gen Zs typically value experiences over things and, the CLIA notes, have "an even greater wanderlust... The appeal of multiple destinations and unique experiences... is helping attract this new generation of cruisers," it maintains.



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